



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

---

## NEWS RELEASE

---

Contacts: Elliot Krieger, Communications – (401) 222-8471  
Or Angela Teixeira, Commissioner's Assistant, (401) 222-4690  
Nick Lorenzen, Nellie Mae Education Foundation – (781) 348-4239  
Stephen Abbott, Great Schools Partnership – (207) 773-0505

Embargo until: Monday, December 15, 2008. 3:30 p.m.

### **Major Grant Supports New Four-State Partnership on High-School Reform**

#### ***\$1M from Nellie Mae Education Foundation and Gates Foundation to Support Effort***

PROVIDENCE – Rhode Island and three other New England states announced today (December 15th, 2008) a groundbreaking regional partnership aimed at transforming high school for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the largest philanthropy in New England focused exclusively on education, has committed \$1 million—which includes a \$500,000 partnership grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—to provide initial support for the New England Secondary School Consortium. The Consortium will initially include four states: Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Governor Donald L. Carcieri announced the award of the grant in a news conference at the State House. The other three states in the newly created Consortium also announced the award of the grant today. These announcements come a week after Maine joined with Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont in the NECAP multistate testing partnership.

“As a state and a region, one of the greatest challenges before us is improving student performance, particularly in secondary grades,” said Governor Carcieri. “In the few years since the launch of the NECAP collaboration with New Hampshire, Vermont, and now Maine, we have put rigorous standards in place and created sustainable learning for every secondary student. We still have work to do to ensure that our students succeed in the new information-technology economy. This generous grant will further the collaboration among the four states to continue to transform our educational system to compete on the global stage.”

-more-

The newly formed Consortium has set five ambitious and specific goals, including: increasing the graduation rate to 90 percent, decreasing the dropout rate to less than one percent, increasing the percentage of students who enroll in two- or four-year colleges to 80 percent, reducing the need for college developmental and remedial courses to 5 percent, and ensuring that more students who enter college graduate from college.

“Over the past several years, the Board of Regents has put into place groundbreaking regulations on secondary-school reform,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “We now face the challenge of putting these policies, including our proficiency-based graduation requirements, into practice. We greatly look forward to working with our partner states as we launch this coordinated regional movement with its very ambitious goal: to redefine the traditional concept of the American high school.”

Initially, the participating states will conduct a comprehensive review of the rules, regulations, and laws governing education. The resulting policy map will inform the development of new state and local policies that will stimulate educational innovation, encourage the implementation of new models of teaching and learning, require personalized support for each student, and clarify performance expectations for both educators and students.

The Consortium will also undertake a wide-ranging examination of state learning standards, teaching strategies, assessment practices, professional-development programs, and student outcomes in relation to the highest-performing international educational systems.

“We’re thrilled to be working with the Consortium and the Gates Foundation to stimulate the transformative change needed in our public schools,” said Nellie Mae Education Foundation President and CEO Nicholas C. Donohue. “We also remain open to extending membership to the rest of the New England community as the work of the Consortium develops. This is a tremendous opportunity to ensure that learners across New England acquire the skills and knowledge necessary today to be economically self-sufficient, lifelong learners. What sets the Consortium apart from other reform efforts is that we’re focused on the next generation of educational standards, assessments, and other policies defining schooling.”

“Far too many young people leave high school without the education they need or deserve,” said Andrew Smiles, Program Officer with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “We are proud to partner with the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and are excited about the prospect this work holds for improving education in New England and beyond.”

“Changing an education system requires a serious commitment of time and resources from stakeholders across the spectrum of the education community,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “In Rhode Island, we have been engaged for several years in implementing a Diploma System based on personalization, supports for students, and proficiency-based graduation requirements. We are eager to work with our partner states across New England to share our successes and to learn from and implement the best practices of the other states in the region.”

-more-

Coordinated by the Great Schools Partnership at the Mitchell Institute, the Consortium will bring together the departments of education from the four states, educators, and educational leaders from across New England in a far-reaching regional alliance. The group will share resources, talents, and expertise while exploring cost-saving efficiencies in pursuit of a common mission: Ensure that by 2016 all public-high-school students in the four states will receive an education that will prepare them for college, career, and civic responsibility in the interconnected global community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A steering council consisting of representatives from governors' offices and key legislative, education, and business leaders will be established to guide and build support for the work of the Consortium.

For more information about the Consortium, see [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org)

**The Nellie Mae Education Foundation** is the largest philanthropy in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation provides grants and other support to education programs and intermediary organizations in order to stimulate transformative change in public education systems and ensure that all New England's learners are prepared for success. The Foundation investigates, promotes and supports a greater variety of high-quality educational opportunities that enable all citizens—*especially and essentially those from underserved populations*—to obtain the skills, knowledge and supports necessary to become civically-engaged, economically self-sufficient, life-long learners. Since it was established in 1998, the Foundation has distributed nearly \$83 million in grants. Currently, it primarily provides funding through five strategic initiatives: *Early Learning*, *Pathways to Higher Learning*, *Time for Learning*, *Adult Learning*, and *Systems Building*. [www.nmefdn.org](http://www.nmefdn.org)

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, **the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org)

**The Great Schools Partnership at the Mitchell Institute** works to redesign and strengthen public and private education to improve the quality of learning for all students. With decades of collective service in support of public secondary schools, the Partnership develops cutting-edge tools and resources, oversees the implementation of major public and private grants, and provides school coaching, professional development, technical assistance, and consulting to educators, schools, districts, organizations, and government agencies. The Partnership is led by J. Duke Albanese, former commissioner of education for the state of Maine, and David Ruff, former executive director of the Southern Maine Partnership at the University of Southern Maine. [www.greatschoolspartnership.org](http://www.greatschoolspartnership.org)



# Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Home Board of Regents Data News Offices FAQ Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Inside RIDE Public Schools Learning Teachers & Administrators Students, Families & Community Search

## Inside RIDE



- [Offices & Programs](#)
- [RIDE Directory](#)
- [Education Policy](#)
- [Laws & Regulations](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Federal & State Funding](#)
- [State Testing & Reporting](#)
- [More...](#)

## Public Schools



- [School Directory & Calendar](#)
- [School Improvement / SALT](#)
- [Support & Intervention](#)
- [School Report Cards](#)
- [School & District Data](#)
- [Middle & High School Reform](#)
- [NECAP Test Results](#)
- [More...](#)

## Learning



- [Statewide Curriculum](#)
- [Expectations/Standards](#)
- [Instruction](#)
- [Students with Disabilities](#)
- [English Language Learners](#)
- [Adult Education & GED](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [More...](#)

## Teachers & Administrators



- [Certification](#)
- [I-Plans](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Educator Preparation](#)
- [Mentoring and Support](#)
- [Educator Recognition](#)
- [More...](#)

## Students, Families & Community



- [Social Services](#)
- [Nutrition, Health & Wellness](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [Academic Enrichment](#)
- [Before & After School](#)
- [Higher Education Support](#)
- [Resources for KIDS!](#)
- [More...](#)

## ABOUT RIDE

### "Working together to bring all students to proficiency"



School improvement is a challenge for all of us – parents, teachers, and students of course, but also business leaders, labor leaders, and community members. Let's work together to ensure the best possible public education for all of our students.

Peter McWalters

*Peter McWalters*  
Commissioner

## RIDE Headlines

## Quick Links

## FAQ

## Calendar

© 2006 Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. All rights reserved.  
Please contact [webmaster@ride.ri.gov](mailto:webmaster@ride.ri.gov) with questions or comments about this Web site.  
Rhode Island Department of Education · 255 Westminster Street · Providence, RI 02903 ·  
401.222.4600

Site Best Viewed at 1024x768



Download Adobe Reader